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ABSTRACT

The relationship between occupational stress and general stress and possible relationship among selected teacher personal and situational variables and the two types of stress was investigated. Subjects of the study were teachers in Huntsville, Alabama, a city of 145,000 with an industrial and agricultural economy. There was a return of 41 percent from 1,400 elementary and secondary school teachers who were given questionnaires and a survey. Three instruments were used: (1) a demographic questionnaire developed for the study; (2) the Clark Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire; and the Everly Personal Lifestyle Survey. Conclusions made from the study involve: (1) composition of the total teacher population in Huntsville; (2) results' applicability, on a national scale, with respect to career decision making concerns; (3) teachers' ambivalence relative to career decisions; (4) general and occupational stress; (5) teachers' economic concerns; (6) student behavior; (7) interpersonal relationships; and (8) personal and situational variables. Recommendations evolving from the study involve preservice and inservice training, selection of personnel, and future research possibilities. Tables reporting results of the data analysis and a sample of the questionnaire are appended. (JD)

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TEACHER BURNOUT/STRESS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION/ PERSONNEL SELECTION/STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A Presentation to the National Conference of the National Council of States on Inservice Education

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Teacher Burnout/Stress Management Research:
Implications for Teacher Preparation/Personnel Selection/Staff Development

The major purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between occupational stress as measured by the Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire (Clark, 1980) and general stress as assessed by the Personal Lifestyle Survey (Everly, 1979), as perceived by classroom teachers in the Huntsville City School System in Alabama. A secondary purpose of the study was to explore the possible relationship among selected teacher personal and situational variables and the two types of stress considered in the study. Additionally, the data generated by the study were analyzed with particular emphasis placed upon the staff development implications for the school system.

Recent proliferation of literature suggested that teacher stress has reached epidemic proportions in many areas of the country. The literature further suggested that job-related stress has diminished the satisfaction that many teachers derive from their work, caused many good teachers to choose alternative careers, and lessened the energy and creativity that many outstanding teachers can bring to their classrooms. In fact, many studies have been completed that indicate stress is a major occupational hazard of teaching.

Setting of the Study

The city of Huntsville, population 145,000, basically has a combination of industrial and agricultural economy. The majority of the students enrolled in its schools are primarily from middle-class backgrounds. A large number of the parents of these city school students are employed in technical and professional fields; many of them have completed at least 12 years of schooling and advanced work at the college level. In fact, there are over 700 residents with doctoral degrees. This figure does not include medical doctors, dentists, or retirees. The 1981 median household income for the city of Huntsville was $21,634.

In 30 years of planned and orderly growth, Huntsville has made the transition from cotton to missiles to space to diversified industry; yet, the city maintains a high level of effort in all phases. Technological and management spin-offs from aerospace projects have had a considerable impact on industries, educational institutions, and public services. The "Industrial Directory" lists nearly 505 companies with more than 33,000 employees. Less than 25% of them are working in support of missile and space projects.

The United States Army provides employment for 10,000 civilians and 3,500 military specialists through its worldwide responsibility for military and missile systems. The Marshall Space Flight Center of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration employs 3,700 specialists with its responsibility for a number of important projects, including the Space Shuttle.

The city of Huntsville can be labeled economically and culturally as the most diversified and progressive community in its population class in the United States. There is probably no other town or city in the state of

Alabama that resembles it; yet, in many ways, the city of Huntsville retains a small town attitude, especially where politics is concerned. For example, in the early 1970s, the city voters of Huntsville chose the option of electing the members of the Board of Education. Previously, the members of the Board had been appointed by the City Council. The City Council was noticeably upset over their loss of power and control with the Board of Education and their disappointment was evidenced in a recent decision concerning funding.

The Huntsville City Schools primarily have three sources of revenue--state allocation, federal monies including Impact Aid, and the 1.6 million dollars budgeted by the City Council. After consecutive years of state proration and decreasing monies from the federal government, the 1.6 million dollars from the City Council became an increasingly important revenue for the Board of Education. In an effort to secure more monies to avoid further teacher layoffs and possible accreditation problems, the Board of Education asked the city voters to approve an additional 1-cent sales tax. However, in accordance with the mood of the rest of the country, the voters of Huntsville soundly defeated such measures.

The Madison County Commission, in what was labeled as political suicide, passed a temporary 1-cent sales tax to help the school systems of both the county and city. The City Board of Education thought that their troubles were over with this action. However, the City Council soon decided to take their 1.6 million dollars and budget it in other needed areas. With this action the Madkson County Commission threatened to rescind the 1-cent sales tax. The City Board of Education then faced additional teacher layoffs and possible school closings.

At the peak of the political rhetoric between the Board of Education and the City Council, with teacher layoffs and school closings as possibilities, the instrument package of this study was distributed to the 1,400 teachers of the Huntsville City Schools

Design of Study

This study was basically descriptive and exploratory. Through the use of questionnaires, an effort was made to determine the relationships among general stress, occupational stress, and selected personal and situational variables of classroom teachers.

Sample. The sample of classroom teachers who participated in the study was employed by the Huntsville City Schools. All certified classroom teachers, 1,400 in number, were given the four pages of questionnaires and surveys to complete and return. The Huntsville Education Association and the Central Office of the Huntsville City Schools provided support for the study and assisted in distributing the package of instruments. Useable responses were received from 573 teachers which represented 41% of the potential respondents.

Instruments. Three instruments were utilized in this study, two of which were selected based on previous use in related research efforts. The demographic questionnaire was developed by the researcher specifically for its intended use in this study. The development of this demographic instrument was influenced by a review of the literature which indicated that certain job-stress items were related. The instrument also was influenced by a questionnaire developed by Clark in her doctoral research at Auburn University in 1980. A number of items were added in keeping with the exploratory nature of this study (attached).

The instrument, Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire, was developed and used by Clark (1980) in her study. The questionnaire originally was composed of 97 Likert-type stimulus items and was administered initially to 391 classroom teachers in Georgia. Later refinement of the instrument reduced it to 30 items. It was then cross-validated by use with a random sample of 400 teachers in Alabama (attached).

The third instrument used in this study was developed by Everly (1979) from the University of Maryland. The survey consisted of 20 items and yielded subscales, adaptive coping and maladaptive coping. Everly administered the survey to 201 subjects with results consisting of a mean of 5.5 and standard deviation of 1.9 for the adaptive coping strategies and a mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 1.4 for the maladaptive coping strategies. The instrument was considered to be literally a life-style survey whose items were generated on the basis of face validity based on earlier research by the author (attached).

Data Collection. Data were collected through the cooperation of both the Huntsville City Schools Central Office and the Huntsville Education Association (HEA). The data-gathering package, consisting of the three instruments, was distributed to all the certified classroom teachers employed by the Huntsville City Schools. The package was distributed to the 1,400 teachers by inter-system mail.

Data Analysis. The responses by the Huntsville classroom teachers to the 69 questions on the survey were first recorded on coding sheets and then keypunched on computer cards for the purpose of computer analysis.

Descriptive statistics were used to compute the data by employing the frequencies procedure from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975). Histograms from the frequencies

procedure of SPSS were constructed for demographic variables and on total scores from both the Personal Lifestyle Survey (Everly, 1979) and the Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire (Clark, 1980).

The crosstabulation procedure of SPSS was used to crosstabulate responses on the demographic questionnaire with other variables. Patterns of responses were observed by crosstabulating selected variables with demographic variables in trend analyses as directed by the results obtained on the major hypotheses.

The Pearson Product Moment techniques (Kerlinger, 1973) and Multiple Regression procedures (Borg & Gall, 1979) were used to test the three hypotheses. For hypothesis 1, correlations were established among the two subscale scores on the Personal Lifestyle Survey (Adaptive and Maladaptive) (Everly, 1979) and among the total scores generaged by responses on the Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire (Clark, 1980). For hypothesis 2, the maladaptive subscale score for the Personal Lifestyle Survey was the dependent variable with the items from the Demographic Information Survey as the predictor variables. For hypothesis 3, the dependent variable was the total for the Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire and the predictor variables were the items from the Demographic Information Surve.

Pilot Study. A pilot study was conducted to ascertain the adaptability of the instruments in this study. Selected graduate students enrolled in the College of Education at The University of Alabama, Summer Session, 1981, were used as subjects for the pilot study. Fifty-five participants from the three teaching levels of early childhood, elementary education, and secondary education res onded to the three instruments. Responses were tabulated and programmed into a computer using various analysis methods and procedures. These preliminary findings supported the extension of the study into formal dissertation status.

Conclusions

The findings of the current study, as presented in the data presentation and analyses in the third chapter and as supported by the review of the literature, provided a basis for a number of conclusions.

1. It may be concluded that the respondents included in the study fairly accurately reflect the composition of the total population of teachers in the Huntsville City School System on the several personal and situational variables included in the study. (Figure 1)

2. It may be concluded that the sample of Huntsville teachers is quite similar to teachers on a national scale with respect to the career decision-making concerns addressed in the study. (Figure 2)

3. It may be concluded that a majority of the teachers in the Huntsville City School System are or have been in a rather ambivalent state relative to past and continuing career decisions relative to teaching and education. (Figure 3)

4. It may be concluded that general stress and occupational stress are positively related. The person who feels stress in either the general or occupational realm will probably feel stress also in the other doma in. (Table 5)

5. It may be concluded that the recent and continuing economic concerns of teachers have contributed to their stress. Therefore, it also may be conjectured that when economic times become more positive, the degree of stress felt by teachers may decrease. (Table 3)

6. It may be concluded that teachers' expectations for student behavior are dissonant with actual behavior of students and related quality involvement of parents. It may be further concluded that one's sense of failure and self-perceived shortcomings, such as the inability to motivate students to achieve according to capacity, tend to be stress producing.

7. It may be concluded that teacher-teacher relationships as well as teacher-administrator relationships are not perceived as sources of teacher stress in the system. This may be viewed as a positive aspect relative to dealing with other sources of stress in a productive manner. (Table 4)

8. It may be concluded that selected personal and situational variables are related to the stress tendencies among teachers, which provide clues for possible staff development efforts which might be undertaken in addressing the emerging problems of teacher stress/burnout (Tables 6 & 7). The profile of a teacher with high stress tendencies, based upon the data in the current study, would be a white female in the 30-49 age bracket who teaches secondary academic subjects or in a self-contained elementary classroom, who was not particularly pleased with her preservice or continuing in-service/graduate preparation, (Figure 3) and who was ambivalent about teaching/education as a career field (Figure 2). Additional clues for specific focus of staff development programs are evident also in the list of high stressors identified in the study and from the range of responses of an adaptive/maladaptive nature on the general stress instrument. (Figure 4 and Tables 1, 2, and 3)

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made regarding preservice training, in-service training, and future research possibilities:

1. It is recommended that all three questionnaires be distributed to a random sample of classroom teachers statewide. Particular attention should be given to include teachers from an equitable population of rural, suburban, and inner-city school systems across the state, as well as to the racial composition of the sampled teachers.

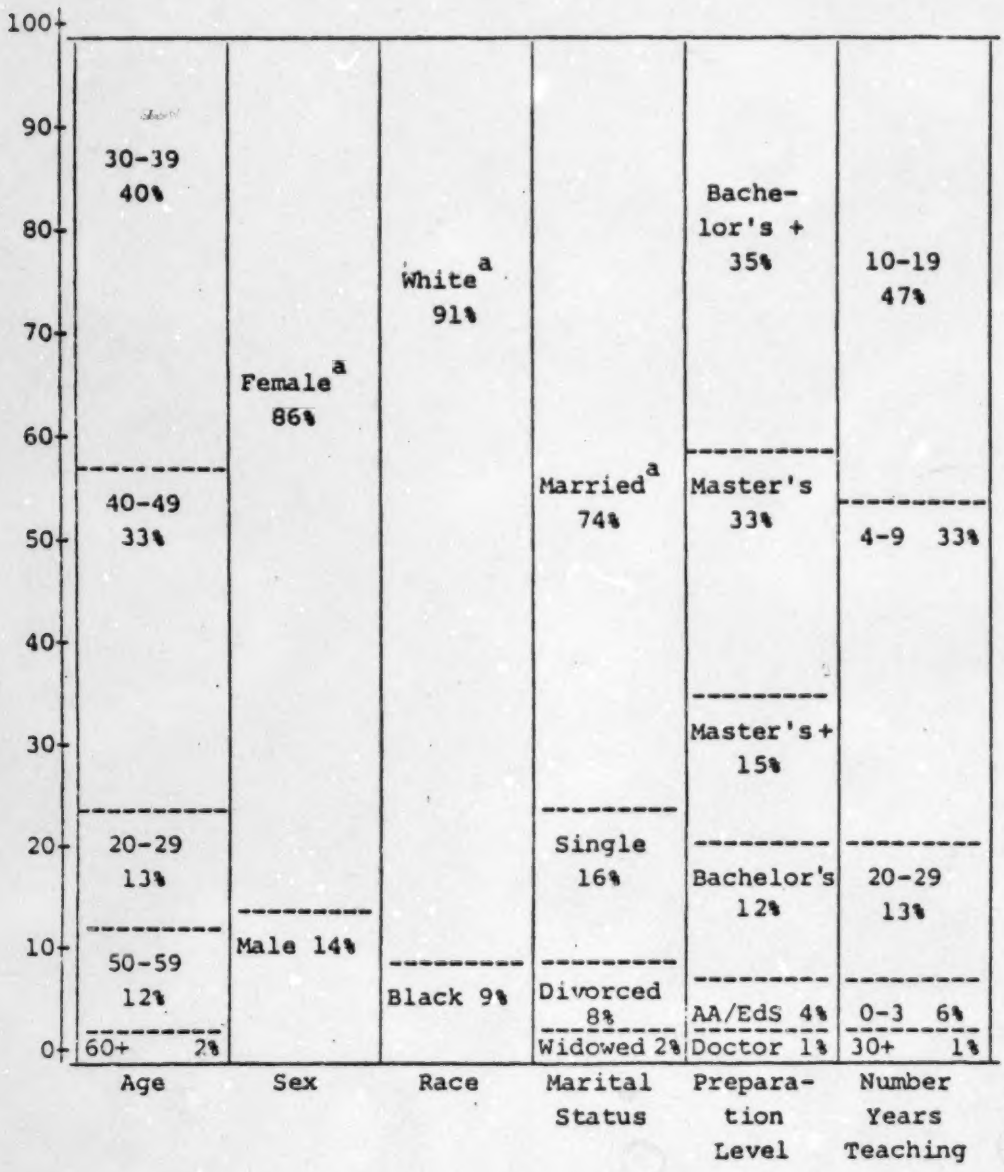
2. It is recommended that several statewide and local in-service programs based on stress intervention strategies be planned and implemented. It also is recommended that this endeavor be cooperatively put into effect by both the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Education Association's Professional Development Department.

3. It is recommended for future research that the three surveys and questionnaires used in this study be utilized in experimental situations at the beginning of a school year and again at the end of a school year (pre/posttest). The sample of teachers who take part in the study should also take part in intervention stress prevention strategy in-services or workshops aimed at reducing teacher stress. Specifically, these workshops and in-services should document whether indecisiveness concerning teaching as a career declines as job stress diminishes.

4. It is recommended for future research a study to determine how stress affects teacher performance in the classroom. It is recommended that the study try to answer the following questions: Are teachers who work in more stressful situations less effective with students than those whose work situations are less stressful? Is there a relationship between teacher stress and student performance?

5. Acknowledging the successes experienced in the medical profession, appropriate attention should be given to teacher stress/burnout concepts in pre-service preparation programs, with particular emphasis upon career-decisions of potential teachers.

6. Subsequent attention should be given in the future uses of the Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire (Clark, 1980) to the absences of stress items related to the public attitudes about schools and teachers which are viewed by some as key sources of stress which impact upon teachers and their abilities to be productive over long periods of time.



[a]Huntsville City School actual frequencies: Sex--85% Female, 15% Male; Race--85% White, 15% Black; Marital Status--Married, 70%+; Employment Status--Tenured, 85%+; School Classified as--Close to half elementary.

Figure 1. Summary Proportional Percentage Distribution of the 12 Demographic Variables for Teachers Employed by Huntsville City School System Responding to Survey--N = 573

Employment Status	Number Pupils in School	School Described as	School Classified as	Teaching Assignment Level	Primary Teaching Assignment
Tenured[a] 90%	600-899 34%	Inner-City 52%	Elementary[a] 45%	9-12 31%	Elementary/Self-Contained 32%
	1,200+ 27%			6-8 27%	Special Ed. 14%
		Suburban 48%	High School 28%		Eng./Lang. Arts 9%
	300-599 20%			3-5 23%	Math 7%
			Middle School 26%		Other 7%
	900-1,199 11%			K-2 19%	Social Studies 6%
					P.E. 5%
					Science 5%
					Vocational 5%
Non-tenured 10%	0-299 8%		Comb. 1%		Kinder. 4%
					FineArts 3%
					Res.Tea. 2%
					F.Lang. 1%

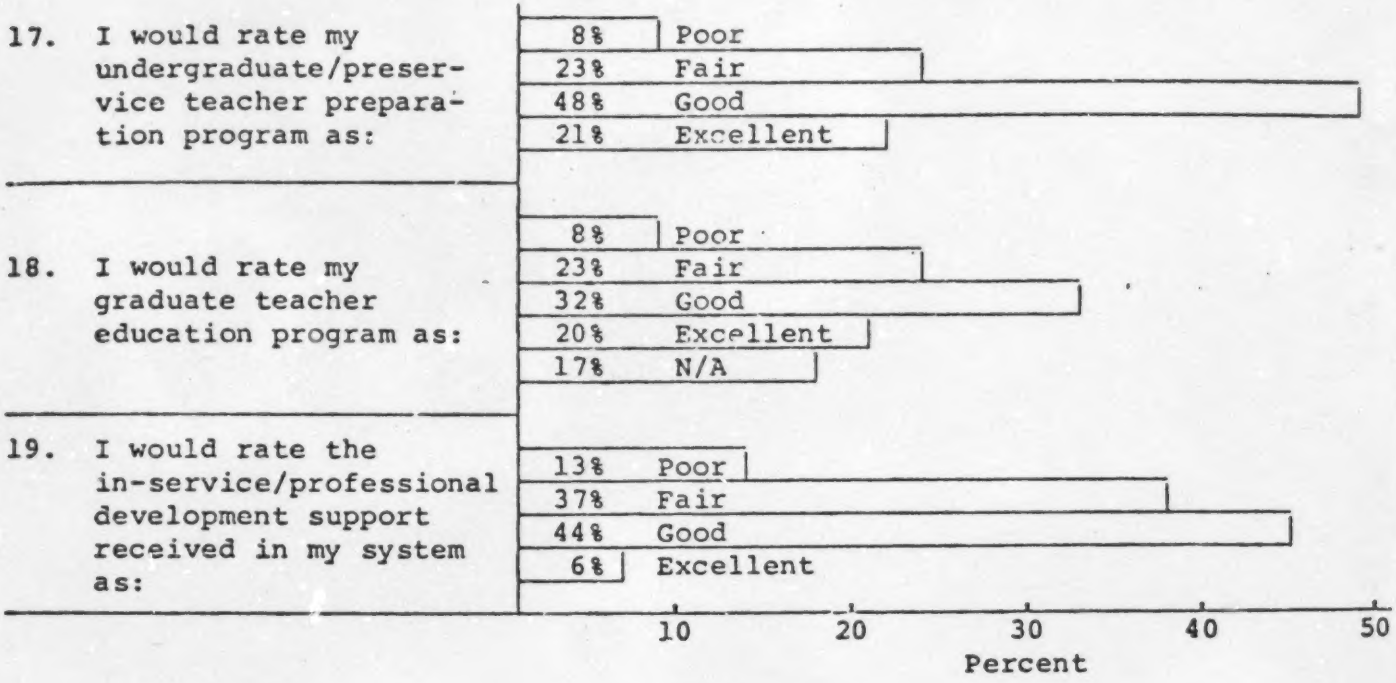


Figure 3. Percentage Distribution of Items 17-19 Concerning Personal Opinions About Teaching as a Career

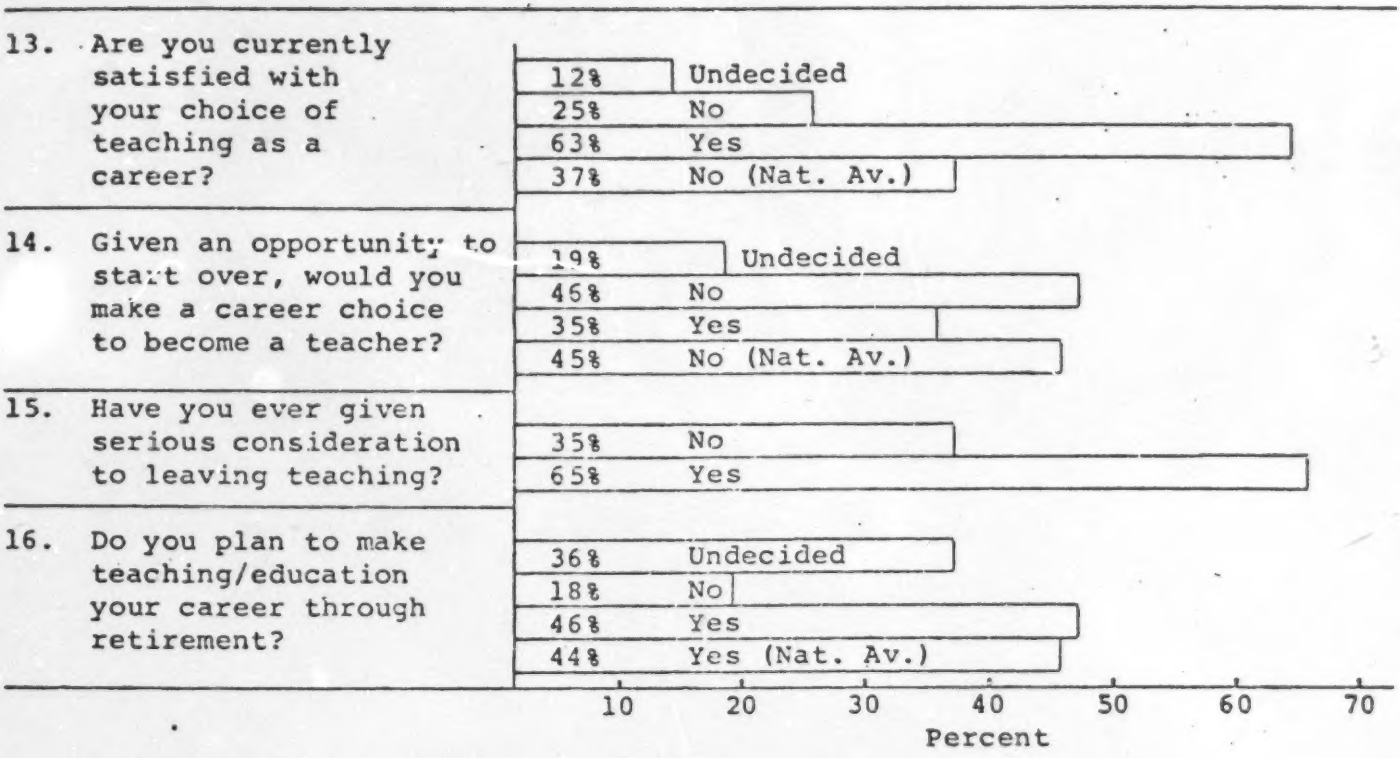


Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Items 13-16 Concerning Personal Opinions About Teaching as a Career

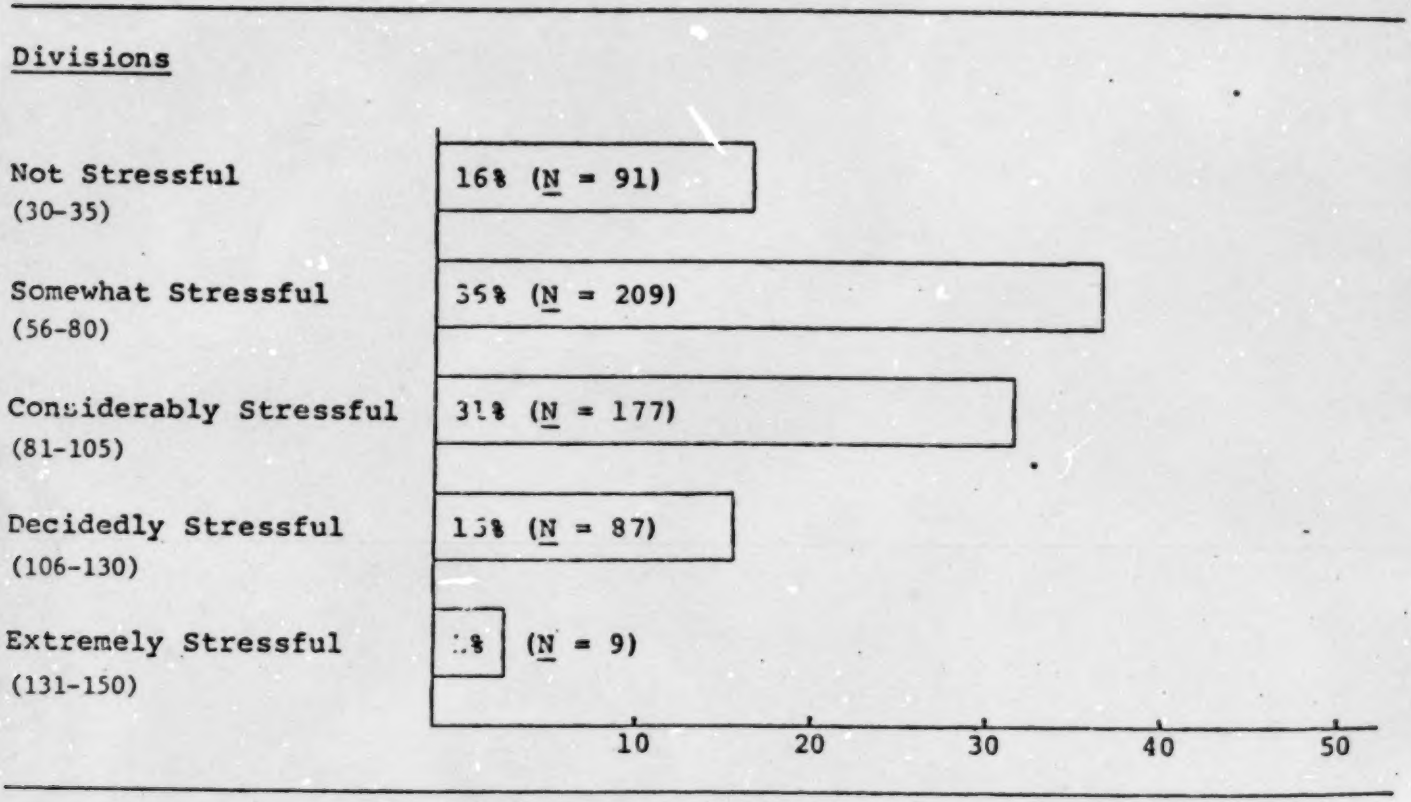


Figure 5. Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire--
Five Divisions Percentage Results

Table 3

Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire--10 Most Stressful Items According to Mean Scores

Item		Mean	Rank
1.	Trying to motivate students who do not want to learn	3.63	1
2.	Feeling salary is not equal to duties and responsibilities	3.55	2
14.	Working for an inadequate salary	3.44	3
28.	Feeling job does not provide financial security needed	3.42	4
19.	Feeling that a few difficult to discipline students take too much time away from other students	3.35	5
29.	Feeling of never catching up with work	3.27	6
12.	Having to tell students same things over and over	3.19	7
13.	Having insufficient opportunity for rest and preparation during the school day	3.17	8
5.	Having students in class/classes who talk constantly	3.10	9
9.	Feeling too many parents are indifferent about school problems	3.08	10

Table 4

Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire--10 Least Stressful Items According to Mean Scores

Item		Mean	Rank
27.	Feeling that cliques exist among teachers in my school	1.95	30
24.	Feeling that I do not have adequate control of my students	1.97	29
11.	Feeling there is competition among teachers in my school	2.00	28
15.	Feeling my principal gives me too little authority	2.02	27
18.	Feeling poor teacher-teacher relationships exist in my school	2.11	26
10.	Feeling my opinions are not valued by my principal	2.19	25
26.	Feeling my principal is too aloof and detached	2.25	24
4.	Working in school where there is an atmosphere of conflict	2.27	23
30.	Feeling poor communication exists among teachers in school	2.28	22
20.	Feeling I cannot tell principal how I feel about school matters	2.33	21

Table 5

Correlated Relationships between Personal Lifestyle Survey and Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire

Personal Lifestyle Survey (PLS)	TOSFQ	Number
Maladaptive	.37*	573
Adaptive	-.05	573

*$\alpha \leq .05$

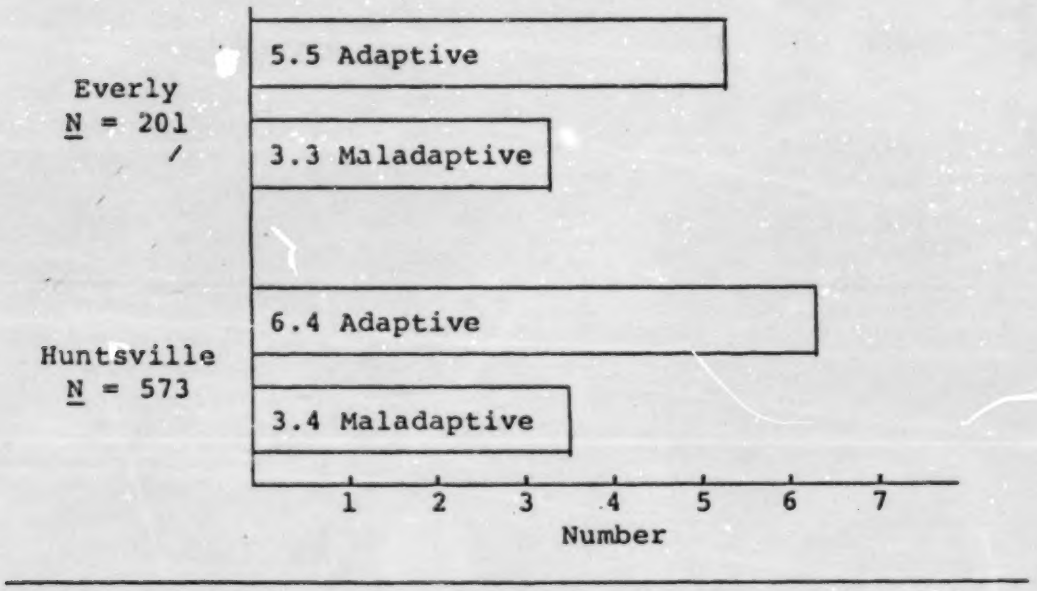


Figure 4. Mean Scores from Respondents of Personal Lifestyle Survey

Table 2

Percentages and Numbers of Yes Responses to Maladaptive Items on Personal Lifestyle Survey

Item		Number	Percent
12.	Do you tend to become generally angry or irritable when under high levels of pressure, stress, or anxiety?	435	76
10.	Do you tend to withdraw or become sad or depressed under high levels of pressure, stress, or anxiety?	311	54
14.	Do you tend to take out your frustrations on others when you are under high levels of pressure, stress, or anxiety?	273	48
8.	Do you tend to eat more to help you cope with high levels of pressure, stress, or anxiety?	255	44
18.	Do you drink coffee or tea to get you going or give you a "lift" during the course of an average week?	227	40
6.	During an average week, do you consume any form of medication or chemical substance to help you cope or just calm you down?	146	26
4.	Do you tend to smoke more when you are under high levels of pressure, stress, or anxiety?	96	17
20.	Do you drink coffee or tea to help you cope with pressure, stress, or anxiety?	85	15
2.	Do you smoke one or more packs of cigarettes in an average day?	72	13
16.	During an average week, do you take any form of medication or chemical substance to help you sleep?	64	11

Note. N = 573.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis Procedure of Demographic Information Survey Items with Teacher Occupational Stress Factor Questionnaire Scores

Demographic Items		F
15.	Have you ever given serious consideration to leaving teaching?	21.181
3.	My race is:	8.591
17.	I would rate my undergraduate/preservice teaching preparation program as:	6.462
19.	I would rate the in-service/professional development support received in my system as:	5.983
8.	The number of pupils in my school is:	5.419
1.	My age is:	5.374
2.	My sex is:	4.966

$R^2 = .16486$; $F = 6.44$

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analysis Procedure--Demographic Information Survey Items with Maladaptive Scores

Demographic Information Survey Variables		F
15.	Have you ever given serious consideration to leaving teaching?	35.211
2.	My sex is:	24.050
3.	My race is:	12.311
12.	My primary teaching assignment is the subject of:	9.142
16.	Do you plan to make teaching/education your career through retirement?	6.776
5.	Level of professional preparation:	5.726
17.	I would rate my undergraduate/preservice teacher preparation program as:	5.500
18.	I would rate my graduate teacher education program as:	5.303

$R^2 = .20809$; $F = 8.08$